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ABSTRACT

This paper concerning the development of simulation materials for training correctional counselors in family counseling is oriented toward developing sequential counseling materials which will have positive consequences for the trainees' use. An offender family counseling training module is presented utilizing a series of transparencies depicting human beings in various stages of distress in conjunction with a method for trainees learning to cope with stressful family emotional situations. (Transparencies are not included, nor need they be specific. Any picture depicting human emotion or distress can be developed into a transparency.) The materials are developed so that the following goals may be accomplished: trainees will be able to more easily integrate theory and skill areas: the simulation materials will enhance the probability of retaining that which is learned since the trainees will be asked not only to cognitively grasp the material but also to actually use it experientially: trainees will see an increased value in the learning experience and view the training as being appropriate to their field. (Author)

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USE OF FAMILY COUNSELING SIMULATION MATERIALS FOR TRAINING CORRECTIONAL COUNSELORS

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INTRODUCTION

There is a dearth of appropriate instructional material relating to the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the area of family counseling with offenders This lack of materials has caused trainers of offender counselors to rely on the adaptation of counseling materials to offenders which has been prepared for populations other than correctional clients.

Experience and research has established that the more similar the materials used within the counselor training setting are to the actual situation, the greater the likelihood of skill acquisition. It is difficult for the correctional counselor trainees to relate theory to practical situations because they have no real way of seeing its applicability. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon the trainer to develop materials which can be utilized by the correctional counselor in training in a manner which integrates theory and practice.

This paper concerning the development of simulation materials for training correctional counselors in family counseling is oriented toward developing sequential counseling materials which would have positive consequences for the trainees' use. It is felt that the materials should be developed so that the following goals may be accomplished:

1. Trainees should be able to more easily integrate theory and skills areas.
2. The simulation materials should enhance the probability of retaining that which is learned since the trainees will be asked not only to cognitively grasp the material but also to actually use it experientially.
3. Trainees should see an increased value in the learning experience and view the training as being appropriate to their field.

BASIC FOUNDATION

In order to understand the reasons supporting the use of the simulation materials it is believed that the counselor in training should first be grounded in some basic

principles and tenents relating to family counseling. It is with this understanding that the approach developed for this paper begins laying its footings with some basic principles of Virginia Satir's "Conjoint Family Therapy" (Satire, 1967, pp. 1-2) which include the following:

1. Individual psychological pain of a family member affects all family members in some manner.
2. The family attempts to behave as a unit.
3. The family exerts effort to maintain balanced relationship.
4. Family counseling works best when it is oriented toward the family as a whole.
5. Often times other family members interfer with the counseling efforts extended towrd the member in need.

The emphasis of these statements is on the interdependence of each family member with every other member in the family unit. The debilitating effect on the family is the same whether the family member in pain is an adult mother or father on parole or a son or daughter on probation. Often times the debilitating effect is complicated by more than one family member suffering from psychological pain. This increases the stress placed on the cohesive bonds of the balanced family relationship. However, no matter what facts or factors contribute to the creation of family imbalance, it remains a basic foundation support that the family is a unit, which most often is working very diligently to maintain homeostasis, and psychological pain felt by one or more members will influence the behavior of the entire family unit. It is with this basic principle that the correctional counselor begins building his or her philosophy.

Once the basic family counseling principles have been mastered by the correctional counseling trainee, he or she is ready to lay the foundation. The foundation takes the form of the following tenents covering behavior development.

Tenent One: Behavior includes both internal and external HUMAN FUNCTIONING. What people actually observe other people doing or saying is certainly behavior, but behavior also goes beyond this overt observation point. The thought processes which precede overt actions is as much behavior as is that which is outwardly

observable. So, too, is internal physical and pyschological pain. Unobserved by others, these pains occur and are perceived by the host organism.

Tenet Two: Much of our behavior represents what we have learned from other people. People teach each other good, practical, useful behaviors as well as problem behaviors which inhibit the actualization process. This teaching and learning process can be accomplished through direct interaction or by accident with one or both parties being unaware of its taking place (Patterson, 1973, pp. 12-13). Whether one learns directly or by accident is probably a matter which should not command much concern; however, it is important that one recognize that what we exhibit internally and externally as behavior is a function of what has been learned from others and it is not something which magically appears through the maturation process.

Tenet Three: Many human behaviors can be understood in terms of the human's desire to maximize rewards and minimize pain (Patterson, 1973, p. 15). When a family member is in pain and the pain is disrupting the family unit, the ability of all family members to maximize rewards and minimize pain is seriously inhibited and adds considerably to the family distress and usually increases the psychological pain felt by all members.

Tenet Four: Just as problem behavior is learned, it can also be unlearned or eliminated and, if necessary, replaced by less pain causing behavior. It is common for individuals to believe that once a set of behaviors become part of one's functioning they will always be maintained by some magical gravitational force. This belief is not true and problem behaviors do not need to continue as part of one's repertoire. People's behavior is related to the ways in which they perceive the reality and what they tell themselves about their perception. If they have learned to perceive unrealistically, they can be taught to perceive realistically. If they tell themselves lies about their perceptions, they can learn to base their thoughts on facts and probabilities rather than half-truths and possibilities.

These four tenents become the operational knowledge which correctional counselors cognitively adopt as a base for their family counseling techniques development. It is important that the correctional counselors view these tenents as viable and workable assets which need to be incorporated in their counseling repertoire if they are to approach the offender family counseling situation with a foundation

which will be of benefit in helping their clients.

PROCEDURE

Once the basic principles and foundation tenents have been introduced and mastered by the counselors in training, the utilization of the simulation materials begins and the learned didactic information is applied to experiential situations.

A series of transparencies have been developed depicting human beings in various stages of distress. These transparencies are not designed to depict exact family settings or situations, but, instead, display human emotions which elicit a reaction on the part of the trainees. Any picture of a human stressful situation can be utilized to develop a transparency provided it can be cognitively related to family stress. It is believed that correctional counselors in training, whose experiences with offender client families has been limited at best, are in need of developing an awareness of how they react to human emotion. The transparencies are used in conjunction with a questionnaire which has been developed that is based on the four foundation tenents discussed above. Each transparency is shown on a screen and the counselors are asked to respond to the questions on the questionnaire as if the person they are viewing was a family member they were counseling. The trainees are asked to use their own perceptions and feelings when responding to the questionnaire. The questionnaire asks the trainee to respond to the following as they look at the transparency on the screen:

1. What do you perceive happening internally and externally with the person/persons?
2. What behaviors do you believe have been learned from other people by the person or persons?
3. What appears to be the person or persons' ability to maximize pleasure?
4. What appears to be the person/persons' ability to minimize pain?
5. What problem behaviors do you think the person/persons need to eliminate?
6. Are there behaviors which should replace the problem behavior and, if so, what are they?

7. List the emotion/emotions which you believe are causing the person/ persons pain.

After the trainees have responded to all the above questions to their own satisfaction they are asked to develop a dialogue between the person they have viewed on the screen and the rest of the family unit. This dialogue is based on the trainee's responses to the questions. They make the family unit any size they want and they can have the dialogue taking place between two or more family members. These dialogues were then read to the group and discussed in detail.

RESULTS

The results of utilizing this technique with counselors in training are based upon statements made by the trainees once they have become familiar with the simulation materials and have used them on at least five different occasions.

Generally, the counselors in training who have used the materials for the specified period of them have given extremely positive feedback concerning the use of these materials. It was noticed, however, that upon initial presentation of the materials many negative statements were made concerning what was perceived as a vagueness of the questions and a difficulty in expressing the "right" answers to the questions. Once the trainee learned that there was no "right" or "wrong" response to a question and that they could express their own thoughts, ideas, and feelings without fear of retribution or embarrassment, the negative comments practically disappeared and positive feedback increased significantly. There was also a dramatic rise in the quality of the dialogues as positive statements replaced the negative comments.

The following is a list of the areas which the trainees believed had been improved through the use of the simulation program:

1. Increased ability to recognize painful emotions.
2. Increased self-awareness concerning their own emotions when dealing with persons in distress.
3. Increased tolerance of human beings in pain.
4. Increased understanding of the interdependence of family members.
5. Increased understanding of how family disruption occurs.

6. Increased awareness of how different family member roles inhibit or or help maintain family cohesiveness.

7. Decreased anxiety level when dealing with family problems.

CONCLUSIONS

It appears that the utilization of the simulation materials was of significant benefit in helping counselors in training to develop an understanding of offender family counseling as well as a base from which to begin operation as a family counselor. The counselors in training perceived that the techniques had benefit in specific areas for them and they believed themselves to be better able to cope with family counseling situations. It appears that the overwhelming positive feedback given by the individuals who were most closely involved with the simulation techniques indicates that this type of learning holds a high degree of utility for training correctional counselors.

FAMILY COUNSELING QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Respond with your own perceptions, thoughts, and feelings to each of the questions as you view the transparency displayed on the screen.

1. What you you perceive happening internally and externally with the person or persons?
2. What behaviors do you believe have been learned from other people by the person or persons?
3. What appears to be the person or persons' ability to maximize pleasure?
4. What appears to be the person or persons' ability to minimize pain?
5. What problem behaviors do you think need to be eliminated?
6. Are there behaviors which should replace the problem behaviors and, if so, what are they?
7. List the emotion or emotions which you believe are causing the person or persons pain.

Based on your responses to the above questions, develop a dialogue between the person or persons you have just viewed and the rest of the family unit. You may make your family any size you wish. The dialogue can take place between the person or persons you just saw and one or more members in the family.

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